

# Lacking

## *Driven by Insecurity*

She could be *her* in the dark—beautiful, adequate, and competent—but when morning came, she would be tender-eyed Leah again. Compared to her sister Rachel, Leah was plain and easily forgotten. Day after day it became increasingly apparent that her husband preferred her radiant and vivacious sister to her. But maybe she could change his feelings...

In Lesson One, we learned that the consequence of woman's sin was, partly, great physical craving and emotional need for her husband (Genesis 3:16). This desire caused woman to "stretch out after" her husband in an attempt to receive his love. Today, women are taking drastic measures to secure their husband's affections, but they are losing themselves and compromising their walk with their Savior in order to keep them. Ultimately, these measures are subtle ways to control their husbands and to receive the greatest longings of their hearts—to be desired, loved, admired, and secured.

When these desires are not met, women are left feeling insecure and inadequate. To add to the problem, the Rachels of the world are constantly telling us that we need to be like them—successful, attractive, and confident—for our longings to be satisfied.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:33-34.

### **Like Rachel**

While many women in the Bible are noted for their physical beauty, none are described in great detail. Perhaps this is because each society determines its standards of attractiveness.

What type of woman does our society consider to be attractive? (Consider personality traits as well.) \_\_\_\_\_

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In what ways do you desire to be like these women? What motivates this desire? \_\_\_\_\_

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Turn now to Genesis 29 and read verses 1-30.

Describe Rachel, and then Leah, according to verses 9, 16-17. \_\_\_\_\_

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Leah is described as a woman whose "*eyes were delicate*," while Rachel is described as "*beautiful of form and appearance*" (Genesis 29:17, NKJV).

The Hebrew word for "*delicate*" is *rak*, and pertains to one's physical appearance and temperament. An individual described as *rak* is "gentle, tender, and indecisive," indicating "frailty [and] weakness."<sup>1</sup> When used in regard to Leah's countenance, we are left with the impression that she was dull or plain; average in today's terms.

In regard to Leah's temperament, the word "*rak*" does not describe someone who is vivacious, aggressive, and bold, but rather, one who is calm, mild, and moderate. As you can see, there was nothing striking about Leah's appearance *or* temperament. She caught no one's attention, especially Jacob's.

Leah's sister, Rachel, on the other hand, *was* striking and physically desirable.<sup>2</sup> The King James Version tells us that Rachel was "*well favored.*" Her presence alone demanded attention. She was skilled in a trade, and as we will soon learn, her behavior was audacious.

Today's society exalts the woman who possesses qualities like those of Rachel. What feelings have surfaced as you've realized that you do not measure up to society's current standards?

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Has this created insecurity, or a sense of inadequacy in your marriage? Why, or why not?

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If you *are* insecure, you may feel "uncertain" about your husband's fidelity; "not adequately guarded or sustained: unsafe." You may even feel that your relationship is "not firmly fastened, fixed, or stable." Ultimately, you will be "beset by fear and anxiety."<sup>3</sup>

Let's continue in our text. Jacob had longed for his union with Rachel for seven years. But that evening, Jacob unknowingly, yet passionately, shared his heart and his bed with Leah. Describe what it must have been like for Leah. (Remember, Jacob was deceived until morning.) \_\_\_\_\_

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How did Jacob react when he found Leah, rather than Rachel, lying beside him? \_\_\_\_\_

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After experiencing Jacob's love, how must Leah have felt upon hearing his words to Laban...*and* the arrangement of marriage to her sister? \_\_\_\_\_

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What must it have been like for Leah to compete with Rachel for Jacob's attention? \_\_\_\_\_

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Every woman desires to be a Rachel in her husband's eyes, but with such a high standard of beauty and competence, even the most beautiful women are left feeling that they have to compete. What are *you* willing to do to secure your husband's love?

### **"Now He'll Love Me..."**

Read Genesis 29:31-35.

In verse 31, we are told that the Leah was "*unloved*" by her husband. The King James Version tells us that "*Leah was hated.*" The Hebrew word for "*hated*" suggests that Leah was disliked and shunned by Jacob.<sup>4</sup> He simply refused to love her as he loved Rachel.

According to verse 32, what did Leah hope to gain from bearing Jacob's first son? \_\_\_\_\_

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The Hebrew word for "love" in verse 32 is *ahab*. It means to "have a desire for [an attraction or an affection for], with a focus on a preference of one thing over another."<sup>5</sup> "Love me like her!" Leah would say. *Ahab* is the same Hebrew word used of Jacob's love for Rachel in verse 30. Leah indeed hoped that the birth of this child would turn the tables.

What was Leah convinced would change after bearing his third son? Record her words (v.34). \_\_\_\_\_

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After the birth of her third son, Leah's desire for Jacob's exclusivity grew more intense. The Hebrew word for "attached" is *lawah*, meaning to "be joined, [or] bound to one in a relationship."<sup>6</sup> *Lawah* implies fidelity.

If we read ahead, Genesis 30:20 will tell us that Leah continued her attempts to gain Jacob's love through external means. What did she believe would result after bearing Jacob his sixth son? \_\_\_\_\_

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The word "dwell" can also be translated "honor." The Hebrew word is *zabal*, meaning "to exalt, treat with honor; raise to a higher status of respect and love."<sup>7</sup>

In Leah's society, the birth of a son was considered a great honor "because a family's heritage and inheritance was preserved through its sons."<sup>8</sup> Just as Leah believed the birth of multiple sons would bring her security and recognition, we often believe that if we attain our society's ideals—or our husband's ideals—we will secure his love.

In what ways are women attempting to gain, or keep, their husband's love or admiration?

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Have you ever said, "If I was \_\_\_\_\_, my husband would love me more"? If you have, fill in the blank.

How have *you* attempted to secure your husband's affections when you are feeling insecure?

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Have you attempted to be "someone else" in the process? \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you compromised your walk with the Lord to gain your husband's love? How? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Jealousy

Read Genesis 30:1-24. What feelings did insecurity and inadequacy create in Leah and Rachel (vv.1, 15-16)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Envy is the “painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage.”<sup>9</sup> Feelings of envy exist towards others in the areas we personally find the most significant. This is often fueled by jealousy—the fear that another will take our place.

Leah and Rachel’s contentions continued for the rest of their lives. What one did not have she envied in the other. When Rachel finally attained what she most desired, it wasn’t enough. Tragically, Rachel’s desire to be what her society exalted led to her death. (See Genesis 30:23; 35:16-19.) Read Proverbs 23:17.

Leah is best known for what she lacked: beauty and her husband’s love. Perhaps, after Rachel’s death, Jacob became keenly aware of his first wife’s greatest needs—to be loved, desired, and admired. On his deathbed, Jacob asked that he be laid to rest with his wife, *Leah*. Read Genesis 49:29-31.

*“He has made everything beautiful in its time”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NKJV).

In closing, read Proverbs 31:30.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In Isaiah 3:16-24, we are told of God’s displeasure in the women of Judah. Parallel these women with the women of today.
2. The people of Judah were God’s chosen people. This includes the women listed in this passage. Rather than setting themselves apart, they adopted their culture’s practices. What similarities do *you* share with the women of Judah?
3. In what ways have you used your sexuality to attract your husband’s attention?
4. Have you ever excused your lack of modesty because the occasion was “special”?
5. Have you considered that your attempts to attract your husband’s attention are also attracting the attentions of other men, causing them to stumble? Read 1 Corinthians 8:9, 11-12.
6. What do 1 Peter 2:11-12 and 3:1-2 say about the type of conduct that will win your husband’s attention?
7. Insecurity shows up when an attractive woman steps into the room. When your husband glances her way, what feelings emerge in you?

8. Does Matthew 5:28 challenge you to trust your husband in these situations, or to accuse him of unfaithfulness? Explain.
9. How can jealousy destroy a marriage? Consider what is motivating your feelings. Is your jealousy based in truth or suspicion?
10. Women are known to impose false expectations on themselves. If your husband were to make a list of his expectations, what do you believe would be on it?
11. What does God say about attaining worldly ideals? Read Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Ephesians 5:1-4, 7, Colossians 3:1-7, and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5.
12. According to 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:2-5, what does God consider to be beautiful?

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<sup>1</sup> Baker, Warren and Eugene Carpenter. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2003. H7390.

<sup>2</sup> Swanson, James: *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. DBLH 5260, #8

<sup>3</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003

<sup>4</sup> Swanson, S. DBLH 8533, #4

<sup>5</sup> Swanson, S. DBLH 170, #2

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, S. DBLH 4277

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, S. DBLH 2290

<sup>8</sup> Youngblood, Ronald F., ed. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995. 1192.

<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003